

Review

Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Theory and Practice of Yoga: Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson*. Numen Book Series. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005. x + 482 pp. €173.00; US\$ 258.00. ISBN 90-04-14757-8 (hardback).

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This volume makes a valuable contribution to scholarship on yoga by exploring a very wide range of themes relating to yoga in multiple contexts in the past and present. It explores aspects of yoga theory and practice not only as elaborated in classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga texts and treatises, but also in relation to such diverse traditions as Advaita Vedānta, Tantra, Śrīvaiṣṇavism and *bhakti*, Sufi mysticism, Jungian psychoanalysis and the Platonic dialogues (to name but a few). The wide range of themes included within this volume reflect the plurality of meanings and practices associated with yoga, and indicate the problems one is likely to encounter if one seeks to confine yoga within narrow definitional boundaries.

The editor provides an excellent introduction to the volume by mapping out the historical development of yoga and yoga-related themes from the time of the Upaniṣads through to their exposition in Pātañjali's *Yogasūtra*. He carefully explores the relationship between yoga and Sāṃkhya, explaining what the two share in common, and identifying important differences. He then provides an overview of the many forms of yoga that have obtained in practice across the centuries and to the present, within and beyond the Indian subcontinent.

In the opening contribution, Lloyd Pfeuger explores 'god talk' in classical yoga, arguing that the locus of divine power in the *Yogasūtra* is not īśvara but the yogic adept and guru. The following chapter by T. S. Rukmani discusses changing notions of the *jīvanmukta* in different Sāṃkhya texts. The guru-theme introduced by Pfeuger crops up repeatedly in later chapters, most centrally perhaps in Antonio Rigopoulos's discussion of the *Guru-gītā* and its incorporation in a sixteenth-century Marathi text, and in Jacobsen's chapter on a living 'Sāṃkhya-Yoga' tradition which originated in nineteenth-century Bengal, where the living guru isolates himself permanently in a cave. Contributions by Richa Clements, Nandini Iyer and Pratap Kumar explore the relationship between Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Vedānta, arguing against perceiving these as isolated systems, and acknowledging their mutual dependence. Chapters by Jeffrey Lidke, Paul Muller-Ortega and Sthaneshwar Timalina examine the tantric method, exploring both theory and practice in the techniques for self-realization employed by tantric seekers. Craig Davis and Ramdas Lamb examine yoga in seventeenth-century Sufi traditions, and in the contemporary Rāmānandi context, respectively.

In some cases the relationship between chapter topics and the overarching theme of the book is rather tenuous. This is particularly so in the case of Kenneth Zysk's

contribution where he offers preliminary remarks on Indian traditions of physiognomy, Pratapaditya Pal's discussion of Kashmiri Viṣṇu images, and the chapter on the *Guru-gītā* mentioned earlier. These authors make little or no attempt to explain the connection between their chosen subject, and yoga theory and practice. Three chapters towards the end of the book look beyond Indic systems of thought and practice to yoga in a wider international context: Judy Saltzman explores yoga in the Platonic Dialogues, Patrick Mahaffey examines Jung's engagement with yoga, and Wade Dazey provides some reflections on yoga in contemporary America.

It is a bit surprising that 'Sāṃkhya' does not appear in the title of the book, since most contributors treat Sāṃkhya and Yoga as inseparable (though distinct) and since most of the contributions deal directly or indirectly with both (some preferring to use the term 'Sāṃkhya-Yoga' rather than either 'Sāṃkhya' or 'Yoga'). On the whole it would appear that the contributors had no prior knowledge of the contents of the book—there is no cross referencing except in the editor's introduction. The volume contains a number of typographical and other minor editorial oversights; it is regrettable that the publishers did not do a better job of cleaning up the text before publishing.

The volume as a whole provides a wealth of insights to anyone interested in the study of Sāṃkhya and Yoga, and is a fitting tribute to Gerald Larson who, throughout his distinguished career, worked towards an ever deeper engagement with these subjects. Jacobsen's introduction as well as James McNamara's concluding chapter provide the reader with a comprehensive account of Larson's scholarly concerns, his mode of scholarship, and the research and teaching aims he prioritized in his lifetime's work. A number of contributors are his former students and some are scholars with whom Larson has collaborated at different phases of his academic career. McNamara's concluding chapter, where he offers his personal reflections on James Larson, is an expression of deep gratitude to 'a truly gifted teacher' who clearly had a far-reaching influence on the lives of his students. This volume is perhaps the best kind of tribute imaginable, since it also showcases the excellence inspired by this highly regarded teacher in the work of his students and associates.